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INDIGENOUS ISSUES

Written statement* submitted by the Society for Threatened Peoples, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[19 January 2002]

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*This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

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Indigenous Issues

The Economic and Social Council of the United Nations adopted on the 28th of July 2000 a resolution to establish a "Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues". This decision is a significant milestone in the decades-long struggle of indigenous peoples to gain standing within the global community. The new UN body will formally integrate indigenous peoples and their representatives into the structure of the United Nations. The Permanent Forum contains unique opportunities for enhancing the human rights, as well as the economic, cultural and social rights of indigenous peoples. The Forum might have the potential of becoming a catalyst for the improvement of the rights of indigenous peoples worldwide. Therefore the Society for Threatened Peoples calls on the UN Human Rights Commission to urge the international community for a broad financial and political support for the establishment of the "Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues".

On 3 March 1995 the UNHRC decided to establish a working group with the purpose of elaborating a Draft United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The 6th session of the working group was held in Geneva from 20 November to 1 December 2000. Not a single article of the Declaration has been adopted during this session. Instead States have proposed alternate text in relation to ten articles of the Declaration. Several countries have raised fundamental objections or challenged basic principles underlying the Declaration. The UN Human Rights Commission should encourage any member States of the UN to support the adoption of the Declaration.

The UN Human Rights Commission should call upon States to recognise and protect the rights of indigenous peoples to own, develop, control and use their communal lands, territories and ressources and to include indigenous issues in the debate on sustainable development, the protection of local products in the framework of the World Trade Organisation and the reform of World Bank guidelines. Furthermore indigenous issues should be more focussed in the international debate on patents and biodiversity.